

WHAT'S *New*

in the Metropolitan Police Department



*A weekly update for residents, visitors,
and workers in the District of Columbia*

Friday, December 30, 2005

DC POISED TO RECORD FEWER THAN 200 HOMICIDES FOR SECOND YEAR IN A ROW

For the first time in two decades, the District of Columbia is poised to record fewer than 200 homicides in consecutive years. As of midday on Friday, December 30, there had been 194 murders in DC during 2005. The city ended 2004 with 198 homicides, the lowest annual total since 1986, when there were 194. The last time the District had two consecutive years with fewer than 200 homicides was 1985-1986 (there were 148 murders in 1985). By contrast, there were 360 homicides in 1995 and 399 in 1994. The highest year for homicide in DC was 1991, when there were 482. This year's homicide total includes 11 juvenile victims aged 17 and younger. That is down from 24 juvenile victims in 2004 and 13 in 2003. As in past years, the vast majority of this year's homicides were committed with firearms. Of the 194 murders recorded to date, 152 – or more than 78 percent – involved firearms. Knives were used in 17 homicides, or just under 9 percent. Of the 194 murder victims, 172 (88.7%) were men; 180 of the victims (92.8%) were black males or females. The 7th (61) and 6th (37) districts have recorded the most homicides this year. There have been no homicides in the 2nd District; the next lowest total has been 14 in 4D. As of midday on December 30, the 2005 homicide closure rate was just over 60 percent, with 117 closures recorded this year.

① For current and historical homicide numbers, go to:

<http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1239,q,543308.asp>

① The lower homicide rate in DC has corresponded with an increase in the number of firearms recovered by police. As of December 28, the MPDC had recovered 2,336 firearms. That is a 13 percent increase from the 2004 year-end total of 2,065.

① The decrease in juvenile homicides has also coincided with a substantial increase in the number of curfew violators processed by the MPDC. So far this year, more than 3,100 young people have been cited for being out past DC's curfew. That compares with about 1,200 in all of 2004.

DC TRAFFIC FATALITIES UP SLIGHTLY IN 2005

After plummeting 35 percent last year to a decade-long low, the number of traffic fatalities in DC increased slightly in 2005, driven largely by an increase in fatalities involving pedestrians. As of midday on December 30, 49 people had been killed in traffic crashes this year. That compares with 45 fatalities in all of 2004. The 2005 total is still the third lowest annual total over the past 11 years and is 15 percent lower than the average number of fatalities in the previous 10 years, which was 58. This year's fatalities have included 17 drivers, 10 passengers, 16 pedestrians, 3 bicyclists and 3 motorcyclists. Pedestrian fatalities are up from 10 in 2004. Speed was the primary contributing factor in 18 of the 49 fatalities this year. By contrast, there were 38 speeding-related fatalities in 2001. The District launched its automated photo radar speeding reduction program in August of that year, and speeding-related fatalities have declined almost 53 percent since that year. There have been traffic fatalities in all seven districts this year, with 1D (13) and 6D (12) recording the most.

① For current and historical traffic fatality numbers, go to:

<http://mpdc.dc.gov/trafficsafety>

① To combat the recent increase in pedestrian fatalities, the District Department of Transportation recently announced a new effort combining engineering, enforcement and education. Details at:

http://ddot.dc.gov/ddot/cwp/view,a,1252,q,634504,ddotNav_GID,1610.asp

① For information on other traffic safety initiatives in DC, go to:

<http://mpdc.dc.gov/trafficsafety>

STUDY SHOWS ALCOHOL-RELATED FATALITIES DECLINED LAST YEAR IN DC, METRO REGION

Alcohol-related fatalities, crashes and injuries all decreased in the Washington metro region over the past year, and drunk driving arrests are up slightly, according to new statistics compiled by the Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP). In its annual "How Safe Are Our Roads?" report, WRAP also reports that DC has mirrored – and, in some cases, led – the positive trends regionally. The region as a whole saw a decline in the total number of fatalities, crashes and injuries from 2003 to 2004. However, the percentage of fatalities that were alcohol-related continues to increase, from 33.1 percent in 2003 to 33.7 percent in 2004. Nationally, the percentage of traffic fatalities that were related to alcohol impairment was 39 percent in 2004. According to WRAP, DC saw "an impressive decrease" in 2004 in both overall motor vehicle fatalities and alcohol-related fatalities (a reduction of 67.6%). In addition, total crashes in DC decreased by 18.6 percent last year, and alcohol-related crashes dropped by 62.6 percent. The Washington metro region saw a small (0.4%) increase in arrests for drunk driving in 2004. In the District, however, alcohol-related traffic arrests increased by 4 percent in 2004.

SEAT BELT USE RISES TO NEARLY 89 PERCENT IN DC

Through a combination of tough laws and extensive educational and enforcement campaigns, DC continues to rank near the top of US jurisdictions in the percentage of motorists who use seat belts. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recently announced that DC's seat belt use rate has risen from 87.1 percent in 2004 to 88.8 percent last year. It was the sixth consecutive year that seat belt use has risen in the District. In 1999, fewer than 78 percent of DC motorists were buckling up. Officials attribute the increasing trend to initiatives such as the "Click It or Ticket" campaign. "Click It or Ticket" combines aggressive enforcement by MPDC officers with an educational component that includes signs at major gateways into the District, message boards and media messages. DC has one of the most comprehensive seat belt laws in the country, with a fine of \$50 and two driver's license points for violators. Seat belts are required in all seating positions, with the driver responsible for ensuring that all passengers are buckled up. DC law also requires that children under the age of 8 be properly seated in an infant, toddler or booster seat; drivers who fail to properly secure their child passengers face even stiffer penalties: a \$75 fine and 2 points for a first offense. Seat belt use rates in DC are calculated based on observations conducted by the University of the District of Columbia, through a contract with the District Department of Transportation.

NEWS & NOTES

Office of Police Complaints Moves. The Office of Police Complaints (OPC) has moved to new offices located at 1400 I Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005, conveniently located above the McPherson Square Metro Station. The agency's phone numbers remain the same: (202) 727-3838 or toll-free at (866) 588-0569. For more information about the OPC, visit: <http://occr.dc.gov/occr/site/default.asp?occrNav=> |

Chief Ramsey on WTOP, News Channel 8. Chief Ramsey discusses public safety issues with the public during two media appearances in the upcoming week. On Thursday, January 5, from 10-11 am, the Chief has his regular monthly "Ask the Chief" appearance on WTOP radio. Then on Friday, January 6, from 4-5 pm, the Chief appears on News Channel 8's "News Talk" program, hosted by Bruce DuPuyt.

① View the entire report (in PDF) at:
<http://www.wrap.org/highwaysafety05.pdf>

① DC has tough laws and stiff penalties against impaired driving. Get the facts at:
<http://mpdc.dc.gov/dui>

① Access the nationwide study at:
<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>

① For more information about DC's seat belt laws and the "Click It or Ticket" campaign, go to:
http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1240,Q,547844,mpdcNav_GID,1552,mpdcNav,1,asp

DATA BOX

Homicides	as of 12/30/05
◆ 2005: 194	
◆ 2004: 195	
◆ % Change: -0.5%	
◆ Closure Rate: 60.3% (117 closures)	
Adult Arrests	week end. 12/24/05
◆ Total: 779	
◆ Drugs: 136	
◆ Weapons: 21	
◆ Robbery: 10	
◆ Prostitution/Sex Offenses: 22	
Juvenile Activity	week end. 12/24/05
◆ Arrests: 74	
◆ Curfew Violations: 42	
◆ Truants: 0	
Firearm Recoveries	as of 12/28/05
◆ December: 175	
◆ 2005 Total: 2,336	
Traffic Fatalities	as of 12/30/05
◆ 2005: 49	
◆ 2004: 45	
◆ % Change: +8.9%	